- A commitment to engage in partnering
- A commitment to honest and open communication
- A commitment to collaborative problem-solving and a dispute resolution process
- A statement of the goals and objectives of the partnering effort

The charter should be signed by all participants. Often the charter is then duplicated with the signatures on them and distributed to team members and other organizational stakeholders. This reminds the team members of their commitment. Their signatures on the document also send a signal to their subordinates and others in the organization that the participants' credibility is on the line.

If specific targets are set in the charter, they should be balanced between realism on the one hand and genuine commitment and effort on the other. In the excitement of first coming together as a team, it is possible to have an inflated sense of how much change can be accomplished. Unrealistic goals can discourage a team as much as goals that are too modest. The following pages are sample charters from several Corps related cases.

STAGE 2: SUSTAINING A PARTNERING TEAM

A good partnering workshop is like the first quarter of a game. The outcome is usually still determined by how the rest of the game is played. It's as important to do a good job sustaining the team as it is to do a good job forming the team.

This stage doesn't follow a predictable sequence, but studies show that most effective partnering includes these elements:

- Developing an implementation plan
- Setting up ways to monitor how the team is working together
- Participating in periodic follow-up sessions
- Creating ways to reinforce team identity
- Participating in joint training or gaining new skills needed by the team
- Celebrating team successes

Figure 4
Baird & McGuire Partnering Charter

Partnering Agreement

Among EPA, USACE, Mass. Dep., Baird & McGuire Task Force, OHM

We, the partners of the Baird & McGuire Superfund Site, agree to work together as a cohesive team to produce a quality project, that protects and informs the surrounding community in accordance with the contract, on time, within budget, safely while enabling the contractor to earn a fair profit. Members of the Partnering team will deal with each other in a fair, open, trusting, and professional manner. In that spirit, we are committed to the following concepts:

Communication

1. Communicate problems openly and as early as possible.
2. Establish and maintain community relations through open lines of communication by keeping the public informed and an integral part of the cleanup process.
3. Resolve problems and make decisions at the lowest possible level in a timely manner.
4. Maintain a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and resolve personal conflicts immediately.
5. Communicate problems openly before resorting to written correspondence.
6. Develop a periodic evaluation program on the partnership's effectiveness.

Performance

1. Produce a quality product the first time through an effective and committed quality management program. (QA & QC)
2. Complete project ahead of, or on, schedule. (Avoid delays.)
3. Perform work in a safe manner minimizing recordable lost time injuries, and maintaining the utmost concern for public safety in the surrounding community.
4. Promote pride in workmanship by all members of the Partnering team.
5. Minimize formal disputes. (No litigation.)
6. Ensure successful project completion.

Agreed to this date May 26, 1993

Figure 5

CULLMAN-MORGAN PARTNERING AGREEMENT

CULLMAN - MORGAN WATER SUPPLY PROJECT
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Under the terms of this partnership, we, the Cullman-Morgan Water Supply Project Team, are committed to provide a project that meets the needs of the community.

We Agree To:

Maintain open communications
Work in the best interest of the overall project
Recognize individual strengths and optimize involvement through teamwork
Promptly resolve issues at lowest level
Deliver high quality products within budget and schedule

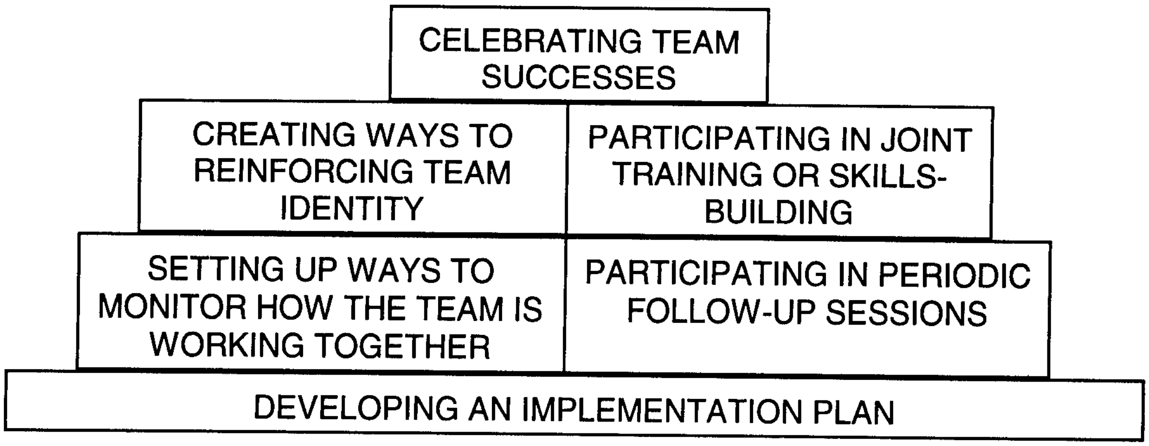
Our Goals:

Our team goals will be accomplished through mutual trust, responsiveness, and flexibility.

We, the undersigned are committed to this partnership, the welfare of each partner, and the success of the overall project.

Chairman, Cullman-Morgan Water District	JOHN L. WHISLER, JR. LTC, CE, District Engineer Nashville District
Vice-Chairman Cullman-Morgan Water District	WILLIAM S. VOGEL COL, CE, District Engineer Mobile District

Figure 6
SUSTAINING THE TEAM
Stage 2 in the Partnering Process



Here are suggestions for how to implement each of these steps:

Developing a Partnering Implementation Plan

Organizational culture is usually learned by a kind of osmosis. People just assume that's the way "normal" people act. Because these expectations are unconscious, they're not even aware they exist. These expectations are like the "default settings" on your computer; they kick in automatically unless you make a conscious choice to change them.

Everybody on the partnering team brings these unconscious expectations to the partnering, based on his/her organization's assumptions about what constitutes normal behavior, and interprets other team members' behavior in light of those expectations. These expectations can lead to substantial misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

The only way to minimize these risks is to *substitute conscious expectations for unconscious ones*. This is why it is important for the Partnering team to talk about group norms, critique how it communicates, and agree on how it will handle disputes. Each of the new agreements replaces unconscious attitudes that can harm the effectiveness of the team.

The partnering workshop begins the process of establishing team agreements, but it is normally not possible to cover all the areas that require agreements. Increasingly, organizations are adding substance to the charter after the workshop by developing a more detailed implementation plan. A partnering implementation plan might include the following:

1. The roles and responsibilities of each organization as they relate to the team
2. Measurable objectives related to each goal
3. A written description of the dispute resolution process
4. A communications plan indicating how the team will consult with other stakeholders, whether internal or external
5. Mechanisms for sharing risks and benefits
6. A process to orient new members of the team

Usually these topics are discussed, at least briefly, in the partnering workshop, but the implementation plan spells out a concrete program for action.

Developing a Dispute Resolution Plan

Of the topics to be included in the partnering implementation plan, a dispute resolution plan may be the least familiar element. Dispute resolution processes should be appropriate to the specific circumstances of each team. The following are some of the points that might be addressed in the dispute resolution plan:

1. <u>Agree to pursue a win/win outcome</u>.
   The basic commitment is to look for "win/win" solutions rather than "win/lose" or "winner-take-all" outcomes. Without an understanding that all parties must be satisfied to achieve resolution, the rest of the dispute resolution process often breaks down.

2. <u>Openly disclose interests</u>.
   Agreement, up front, to provide full disclosure of interests can build a team relationship. Often participants do not let the others know their real interests for fear that such knowledge will strengthen the other party's hand. But during decision-making, the parties cannot take each other's interests into account unless everyone has been candid and open.

3. <u>Agree to follow the process on all disputes.</u>
   If the team sets up a dispute resolution process, team members should be expected to use that process. It is inappropriate for team members to use other processes unless the dispute resolution process has failed. This

means that regulatory bodies should avoid taking unilateral regulatory actions, stakeholders should avoid taking the dispute to the media, agencies should avoid using budgeting as a hammer, and so on, until the dispute resolution process has been tried.

4. Avoid negotiating through the media.
   It is useful to establish ground rules for how and when team members deal with the media. Generally speaking, team members should avoid comments to the media about any dispute currently being addressed by the team. Comments by one of the parties may be perceived as jockeying for negotiating position or abrogating the dispute resolution process. Either way, it can create bad blood that makes resolving the issues that much harder.

5. Recognize that timely resolution is crucial.
   Some teams establish deadlines on how long an impasse will be tolerated before the issues must be moved to the next stage in the dispute resolution process. Nothing is more likely to push a team member outside the agreed-upon process than the failure of the partners to address concerns in a timely manner.

6. Quickly assemble those who are needed to resolve the issue.
   Timely resolution is aided by a commitment from each organization to assemble quickly all those who are needed to resolve the issue.

7. Use different approaches for different types of disputes.
   It is helpful to establish various dispute resolution mechanisms to settle different types of disputes. Technical disputes may be resolvable with additional research or more discussion among technical staff. Third-party technical experts can also be helpful in these situations. For example, a technical issue might be resolved by having all sides present their information and interpretations to a panel of experts or a disputes review panel, who would render a nonbinding opinion. But if a dispute is over political philosophy or values, technical information alone is not going to solve the problem. In such a case, it may be more effective to get the dispute elevated as quickly as possible to the level of decision makers who can resolve such issues.

8. Commit to advocate for the decision when necessary.
   In some cases, decision-making authority resides outside the power of the partnering organizations. An example would be a cleanup plan that does not have sufficient funding from Congress. Even if everybody in an agency is supportive of the plan, it cannot make Congress produce a larger budget. What team members can do, when such circumstances arise, is agree to advocate, jointly and individually, the recommendations of the team to whoever has final decision-making authority.

Setting Up Ways to Monitor How the Team is Working Together

One of the critical tools for developing effective teamwork is periodic evaluation of how well the team is doing. Typically this is done by establishing objectives and criteria in the initial partnering workshop or in the partnering implementation plan. The criteria for measuring team success usually includes measures of productivity (cost, schedule, profitability, safety) and process, or how well the team did in resolving disputes and bringing about organizational improvements. Periodically the team should evaluate how well it is meeting these objectives and take corrective action as needed. When the partnering is finished, a final session to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnering effort, to recognize achievement, and to identify lessons learned is useful. A sample evaluation questionnaire is shown in Figure 7 (see page 39).

Some teams have used outside parties to conduct interviews with team members or other people interacting with the team to solicit perceptions of the productivity and effectiveness of the team. This information can then be summarized and provided as a stimulus to the team at follow-up sessions.

Working as a team means that you are likely to spend a lot of time in meetings. If the team is going to be effective, it needs to know how to use meetings effectively. Team members should not just *assume* that partnering team meetings will look exactly like normal meetings back in their own organizations. First of all, each organization has a different interpretation of what constitutes "normal." More important, many organizations use meeting styles that are appropriate for centralized decision-making, but not appropriate for developing mutual agreements. So teams need to identify and adopt procedures that will do the best job for a genuine team, as distinct from a functional organization.

Some teams find it very helpful to spend 5-10 minutes at the end of each meeting to talk about what they did well, and what they need to improve. One suggestion: when you're giving feedback to other team members, remember not to focus solely on behaviors that need changing. Reinforce useful team behaviors by commenting favorably on those that were helpful.

Some teams find it very helpful to have a facilitator for team meetings, but most teams use an outside consultant only occasionally. A team member can serve as facilitator, so long as the issue being discussed doesn't involve him or her so closely that it is impossible to stay neutral.

Some teams rotate facilitation responsibility, with every team member serving as facilitator periodically. There are many advantages to this. It shows that meeting leadership is not a matter of rank or status, but an important function required by the team. It sharpens the facilitation skills of team members (which can be very useful both in project management and in dealing with the public on controversial issues). Finally, serving as facilitator often sharpens awareness of the behaviors that individual team members need to engage in for the team to be effective.

Figure 7

Figure 12. Sample Partnering Evaluation Form

The Partnering Rating Form developed by the group will be completed by participants on a monthly basis. The intent of the form is to monitor the effectiveness of the overall partnering effort—not to rate how "the other guy" is doing.

PARTNERING EVALUATION FORM

	LOW 1	BELOW AVERAGE 2	AVERAGE 3	ABOVE AVERAGE 4	EXCELLENT 5
Teamwork					
Understanding "Other" Position					
Walk The Talk					
Mutual Respect					
Openness					
Honesty					
Professionalism					
Quality of Synergy					
Trust					
Effective Communications					
Responsiveness					
Issue/Conflict Resolution					
Goal Clarity					

TOTAL: ________ AVERAGE: ________

Observations: ____

____

____

Plans for Improvement: ____

____

____

Award Recommendation: ____

____

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ____________

1 (Low) - Consistently fails to meet expectations of Partnering team
2 (Below Average) - Occasionally fails to meet expectations of Partnering team
3 (Average) - Meets expectations of Partnering team
4 (Above Average) - Occasionally exceeds expectations of Partnering team
5 (Excellent) - Consistently exceeds expectations of Partnering team

Participating in Periodic Follow-Up Sessions

Experience shows that without follow-up sessions, the "us/them" adversarial mentality can creep back in. There have been several cases where partnering was considered an initial success, but without follow-up sessions, misperceptions and miscommunication developed and the relationship soured.

Typically, the follow-up program consists of periodic workshops. Follow-up sessions differ from normal team meetings in that, instead of concentrating on immediate work tasks, they focus on how the team is communicating, whether there are unresolved issues, whether roles and responsibilities are clear, how well the team is doing in meeting its goals, how well the dispute resolution process is working, and what problems exist with "parent" organizations. Follow-up sessions may also include brief refresher training sessions. Typically follow-up sessions last at least one day, with some partnering teams allowing two days. Usually a facilitator is retained to lead these sessions, and attendance should be given high priority.

Several individuals experienced at partnering recommend holding follow-up sessions at approximately quarterly intervals. However, successful partnering efforts have used other approaches. In one case, the partnering participants filled out a quarterly questionnaire that addressed issues such as how the team was communicating and what unresolved issues needed to be addressed. This questionnaire was used as a diagnostic device, with team sessions called as needed to address any problems. In other cases, periodic conference calls are used to identify problems or concerns.

Another reason for periodic follow-up sessions is the inevitable changes in personnel that can be expected. In the Baird & McGuire case, for example, the contractor's staff changed completely during the course of the project, and there were seven changes in the project manager. Without constant re-education in the principles of partnering, personnel changes will inevitably water down the commitment to partnering.

Orientation for new members is imperative. The team as a whole should take responsibility for this orientation, not just the individual organization for which the new team member works.

Beyond sustaining the commitment of team members, there is also a need to sustain or expand the understanding and commitment of individuals in procurement, design and engineering, counsel, human resources, and virtually any other part of the organization involved in establishing requirements or procedures that impact the operation of the team. This is especially true at the installation level where there must be coordination among actors over a variety of projects.

One of the ways to obtain this support is by doing internal partnering. Those people involved in the inter-organizational team could participate in an internal partnering workshop with representatives of all the support organizations. An alternative is to provide brief training programs for all support staff.

Creating Ways of Reinforcing Team Identity

While a partnering workshop can "jump-start" the process of building trust, in the long run nothing completely substitutes for spending a lot of time together. Research shows that most of the best teams "work hard, play hard," but do both together. Obviously, this isn't always possible. But make choices to increase the amount of interaction whenever possible.

Many groups also use visual reminders of group identity. For example, some groups have their charter blown up to poster size, and hang it on the wall in each team member's work space. Another group had its charter made up on throw-away paper place mats that team members used when they had lunch together as part of regularly scheduled meetings. Other teams had purchased coffee mugs, t-shirts, or baseball caps with a team logo.

Depending on the project, it may be appropriate for a partnering team to have a room dedicated to its activities. Having a team room strongly reinforces team identity. This room may simply be a meeting room where the team is able to leave up all its charts and flip chart sheets. A more ideal arrangement is a large enough space so there can be workstations clustered around an open meeting space that can be reconfigured, as needed, for different kinds of meetings. A dedicated work space would probably be appropriate only if team members are going to work together frequently, or are housed at a project site.

Many partnering teams find it helpful to be connected electronically. As a minimum, being connected by E-mail is a very useful way of exchanging information in a timely manner. Most E-mail software allows the sender to *copy* the message to a whole group, so the message needs only sent once, and the whole team gets the same message. If the team has access to a computer network, it can also use groupware that allows the team to work together on tasks, sharing computer files.

Teams that are hooked together electronically have discovered that while electronic communication is very useful for exchanging information, it doesn't by itself build trust. Trust-building is something that needs to take place in person. It is still necessary to hold a partnering workshop and have periodic refresher sessions face to face. Once the relationship is built, then electronic communication is a distinct benefit.

Participating in Joint Training or Gaining New Skills Needed by the Team

In most organizations, training is focused on individuals. In team building, the crucial consideration is what skills are needed in the team. Some of these skills might be acquired by individual members. Other skills may be needed by all team members.

Developing a team training plan accomplishes several things: (1) it says that the team thinks skills training is important, (2) it establishes a priority for team members to get the training they need, and (3) it provides the support of the team in getting funding for training from the various partnering organizations.

For those skills needed by all team members, some form of joint training is particularly effective. Everybody gets the training at the same time, and the team as a whole builds commitment to using the skills. If you schedule joint training, be sure to allow time in the schedule for open discussion of how the skills will be used in the team.

Celebrating Team Successes

Teams need a sense of accomplishment. Teams need to believe they are doing something that matters, and when they succeed, that success needs to be celebrated. Hold victory parties. Make announcements over loud-speakers. Put up celebratory banners. Buy each other little trophies or mementos (keeping in mind appropriate ethics requirements). Do almost anything to reinforce the performance success of the team.